



# the Parent press



The Newsletter for LAUSD Parents Vol. 14, No. 3 • Summer 2010

## Record Attendance for 2010 Parent Summit



It is now a tradition that the thousands of parents who attend LAUSD's annual Parent Summit bring a wide variety of goals with them.

*"I want to ask my local district Superintendent how we as parents can be heard."*

*"I'm looking for new ideas on projects we can do at home that will help my children learn."*

*"My son eats like a machine. I came to learn about cooking healthy and appealing food for him."*

See PARENT SUMMIT, page 5

## The New School Year

As the 2010/2011 school year begins, parents can see that their schools are operating differently. The effects of the huge state budget deficit continue for a second year, and more changes can be expected in 2012 as well. Parents should know exactly how layoffs, reductions in services, and elimination of programs impact the instruc-

tion and operation of your child's campus. LAUSD anticipates the following changes:

- School year will be shortened to end on June 7, 2011.
- Teachers will have seven unpaid furlough days.

Please See NEW SCHOOL YEAR, page 8

Message from  
Ramon C. Cortines  
Superintendent of Schools

### What Will Your Child Do This Summer?



School on the traditional calendar ends early this year, on Friday, June 18, because of the bad state budget situation. How will your son or daughter spend the summer?

Unfortunately, most summer school classes have been canceled, another casualty of budget cuts. Limited instruction will be available for high school students who need to make up classes required for graduation. Restricted to credit recovery, high school students, including incoming freshman who need to make up Algebra I, may also take classes online through the City of Angels virtual summer school program. The six-week program will begin Wednesday, July 7 and end Tuesday, August 17. For more information, go to the LAUSD Beyond the Bell website, [www.btb.lausd.net/home](http://www.btb.lausd.net/home). Information about recreation and free breakfast and/or lunch programs at schools, as well as offerings at parks and libraries in the city of Los Angeles, will be available next month on that same web site.

Vacation resources can be found by clicking on students on the [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net) home page.



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message from

**Christopher Downing**, Administrator, Parent Community Services Branch



**Although the budget crisis has presented several challenges for our District this year,**

one of the positives to emerge has been the strength with which LAUSD parents have stepped up, spoken out, and become more influential in the education of their children. We should all be proud.

School Site Councils will be sharing governance in meaningful ways at local schools in 2010/2011 because more than 5000 people were trained this year to make significant budget and staffing decisions. Every District campus has a video that demonstrates how parents can participate in discussions about funding choices at their chil-

dren's schools. Thousands of parents cast votes in the advisory elections of the Public School Choice process. Thanks to the Parent Engagement Toolkits, hundreds of parenting workshops are being held to provide effective strategies for mom and dad to use at home that will improve student achievement. And we could see the energy and interest in supporting students at this year's Parent Summit.

This school year may be over; but our efforts for our children never stop. I urge you to remember whether your children are on vacation, off-track, or beginning the 2010/2011 school year, we are all partners in their education. In this issue, there are lots of suggestions for summer activities that will be delightful learning experiences. Enjoy! We look forward to your continued energy and involvement. ●

## Parents Step Up



Doreen Delshad and Rita Semprevivo are part of the Fairburn parents team working with teachers and principal Elizabeth Abramowitz (center) to support academic quality.

**As the school budget crisis gets worse, the parents at Fairburn Elementary School get busier. Walk around campus and you'll see examples everywhere of parents working with and for students.**

Reading Buddies matches parents and students who read with and to each other during lunch. Parents of English Language Learners volunteer in the EL classrooms bringing their skills in another language to reading instruction. "Our parents are an integral part of our learning community,"

## College-Prepared and Career-Ready: A Parent's Role



Christian Castro (center), with his parents Alejandra and Salvadore Castro.

**M**ore than 27,000 LAUSD seniors received their high school diplomas this year. Their grades, rankings, and effort will determine who has met the district goal of college-prepared and career-ready and who hasn't. Experts agree that those who meet the standard usually have parents who are actively involved in their education. Just ask Christian Castro, a 2010 grad from Maywood Academy, who is headed for a career in engineering.

"My mom began when I was little," Christian explains. "She walked me to school every day. She'd tell me to grab a book instead of turning on the TV. My folks always talked to me about how to take the initiative." Chris learned those lessons. His GPA is 4.1, with AP physics and calculus on his record. He also takes networking technology classes that can lead to immediate

employment in computer technology. In the fall, Christian begins community college.

Christian's parents agreed that education was so important that one of them would stay home while their children were in school despite the economic sacrifice that meant. "I have no regrets about giving up those productive years because I see how far our kids have come," explains Alejandra Castro. She says she made sure homework got done daily, and then she took her children to the park for sports. "I wanted them busy and involved." She visited school often to show her support of academics. She laughs because "there was usually nothing to discuss with teachers except how well my kids are doing."

### Zella Knight became active in her daughter Anastassia's education very early.

"My mom began reading to me when she was pregnant," says Anastassia with a smile. "And kept at it until I began reading to her when I was about four." Her family taught her that college was always the goal.

"When I was 10, my aunt asked me to write down three careers I was interested in, then three colleges I might like," she remembers. When Anastassia overlooked an application for a college scholarship, her mother urged her not to. Good advice – she won that four-year award, which gives new meaning to college-prepared.

Zella is not only a partner in Anastassia's education, she is an active leader in District parent organizations. "When she was in elementary school, she brought home a parent-student contract to sign, promising that I would always be involved," says Zella. "I took that very seriously, and I still do." Anastassia reminded her mom recently, "While I'm in college, you need to be the voice of other children here." Zella says she believes in giving children options, so they can make their own choices after discussing them with parents. "We did that from the time she was little. And she's become a successful young woman secure in herself and her decisions," Zella says proudly. ●



Zella and Anastassia Knight.

## Parents Green Calvert



Calvert students enjoy showing their ever-green campus as do parent Tracy Bartley and principal Roseanna Neustaedter (L-R, below).

**“When we first moved into our house, I was surprised to find out that most neighbors didn’t send their kids to Calvert Elementary School just down the street,”** recalls parent Tracy Bartley.

“Calvert was nine acres of asphalt and dirt; it looked hot and unappealing. So kids went to private schools, charters, or got permits elsewhere. However, when Tracy visited the school before her daughter was ready for kindergarten, she “fell in love with the staff, the diversity of the school, and their spirit,” she said. “I wanted to bring Calvert back for the neighborhood.”

Four years later, the tornado of parent involvement started by Tracy Bartley has created a model campus. Parents led the change, removing 150 tons of asphalt, planting 122 trees, painting five outside murals, and planting flower gardens around the entrance. Calvert parents became experts on winning grants and donations for the changes to Calvert. Parents raised \$500,000 to fund the greening and beautification of Calvert. “We have become an environmental model because of the extraordinary effort of our parents,” said



Principal Roseanna Neustaedter,

The hard work has made Calvert a district leader. Now designated as a Community School Park Site, the campus will be open on weekends and after school for use by the community, providing a place for games and play in neighborhoods that are last one mile away from a park. LAUSD eventually will identify at least one elementary school in each local district for this kind of joint use. And Tracy Bartley has a new designation, too. She’s been named one of two Green Ombudspersons for LAUSD, ready to share her experience and energy so that other schools can be transformed as successfully as Calvert Elementary.

## The Web for Free Summer Fun and Learning

**H**ave you met the Bots? This LAUSD family of robots may become welcome visitors for parents and children this summer.

Their home is the Internet where they provide dozens of vacation activities, suggestions for fun destinations around LA, and instructional links to exercise student minds as well as their bodies. The Bots’ address is <http://kids.lausd.net>, and they are always there via a computer. For families who don’t have one at home, computers are available at school and public libraries, boys and girls clubs, and community centers.

“The kids.lausd.net website is full of opportunities to engage children in a wide range of activities including word games and art projects,” says Diana Alm Liston, LAUSD’s Webmaster. “Kids can learn how to protect themselves from bullies while coloring a picture. Fun Things to Do in LA highlights local parks and museums that families will enjoy – often for free.” Activities are designed for young children as well as teenagers. An example for the older students is the Daily SAT question, a sample from the college-bound exam that gives kids practice in test-taking along with the correct answer.

There are hundreds of choices on the LAUSDnet Kids website. Ms. Liston suggests that parents begin by setting up an email account for their children. There’s no charge. The web link points children and parents to reading lessons or a microbe zoo. Rich and intriguing summer activities are as close as two clicks away: [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net), click Home, LAUSDnet Kids.

## Parent Summit, from page 1

*“Parents must know how to advocate effectively at their school. That’s what I want to work on today.”*

Parent comments like these were heard throughout the Los Angeles Convention Center as nearly 6000 men and women attended LAUSD’s 14th Annual Parent Summit and InfoTech on April 24th. The record-setting attendance is proof that from San Pedro to Chatsworth, parents recognize how important they are to the success of their children’s academic and personal achievement. In this “unprecedented financial crisis...we are fighting to protect our classrooms and our students,” School Board President Monica Garcia told the audience. “Congratulations for being here.”

Dozens of parent education opportunities filled the day-long event. The workshops and seminars were organized around topics ranging from support for exceptional children to new strategies for learning to conversations with district leaders. “This is my first Summit,” said Carson parent Mia McNulty who wanted information about teaching children with special needs. Another first-timer Glenda Rosales has two girls in middle school who are struggling. “I’m here to see what programs are available to help us.” It was standing room only for two Café LA workshops led by Food Services Chef Mark Baida. He demonstrated how to make healthy meals quickly and inexpensively. Monroe High School parent Sylvia Uvilla sampled a burrito she described as “delicious! I’m going to use this recipe.”

District leaders attended the Summit to hear parents’ concerns firsthand. Six local district superintendents fielded questions and discussed issues for more than an hour. So did most School Board members in an informal format. LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines reminded parents “I need your help and support. I can’t do this alone. I never forget that you trust us with your child.”



## Spotlight on Parent Involvement

### Pilot Schools Want Parents!

One of the reform systems emerging within the Los Angeles Unified School Systems is the Pilot School Initiative (PSI), a network of small, autonomous schools designed to be models of educational excellence throughout the district.

Currently, ten Pilot schools are operating with eight more expected to open in the fall. The PSI model is voluntary: local school communities can ask to bring the reform to their campuses. PSI provides a *choice* system that enables parents, teachers, and students to select a redesign that could transform academic achievement for their students.

To learn more about Pilot Schools, parents, community partners, and teachers are



*Personalized instruction at LA High School of the Arts links students closely to teachers, administrators, and parents.*

invited to a Pilot Schools Summer Institute. For three days, July 29–31, participants will visit Pilot schools, analyze the philosophy and strategies that are the foundation of the reform, look at student data for results, and learn how to apply the principles to their own schools.

Los Angeles High School of the Arts is one of the first Pilot Schools. It opened in 2007. Parent representative Belinda Archilla applauds the reform model; her daughter Stephanie is in tenth grade. “We feel so good about this school,” Belinda says. “With only 400 students, our teachers, counselor, and principal know everyone by name.” When Stephanie was in middle school — a large campus with more than a thousand students — she didn’t do well. “Here she’s succeeding and looking ahead to college or the Marines. My daughter is a priority to her teachers,” says Belinda proudly.

### Adults Can Learn English at Home

Last year, more than 40,000 Los Angeles adults studied English as a second language (ESL) at home rather than attend traditional classes in schoolrooms. This distance learning allows men and women, busy with jobs, family, and other responsibilities, to use instructional ESL videos at convenient times at home. Beginning in the fall, ESL distance learning will get even accessible. The videos will be available on the Internet by mid-fall 2010.

The addition of online access allows adult students to log on to the Internet, watch the instructional videos, and do the homework and testing which will be corrected on the Internet. Teacher assistance and conversation is not eliminated; it can occur online or by phone. Online learning eliminates the need for students to go to schools to obtain the DVDs and workbooks and then return to the classrooms for teacher evaluations and grading.

“We know that a high percentage of adult students can’t come to classes regularly,” says Paul Yung, Program Advisor. “Online learning is our future. When adults have to go classrooms, they miss classes. With distance learning, they never miss a class.” A recent state study has shown that distance learners do better than classroom learners.

The Distance Learning ESL program can be previewed at [www.distancelearningtv.net](http://www.distancelearningtv.net). Additional information is also available at local adult schools. LAUSD adult schools are listed at [www.adultinstruction.org](http://www.adultinstruction.org).

For more information about pilot schools go to: [www.lausd.k12.ca.us/District\\_4/](http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/District_4/)

If you are interested in attending the Pilot Schools Boot Camp Summer Institute, call 213-241-0100.

# Back to School Dates

Due to a number of factors — primarily the ongoing budget crisis, the first day of school in the 2010–2011 school year for LAUSD students should properly be labeled the first **DAYS**

**of school.** Revisions to the single and multi-track calendars were finalized recently. Students will be returning to classes on one of six different days in August and September. Here's a list of those final dates.

<b>TRADITIONAL SINGLE TRACK SCHOOLS</b>	Monday, September 13, 2010
<b>FOUR TRACK SCHOOLS</b>	
Tracks B, C, and D	Tuesday, July 6, 2010
Track A	Tuesday, August 17, 2010
<b>THREE TRACK SCHOOLS (Concept 6)</b>	
Tracks B and C	Tuesday, July 6, 2010
Track A	Monday, August 30, 2010
<b>EARLY START SINGLE TRACK</b>	Monday, August 16, 2010
For 15 selected senior high schools in Local District 1, 2, and 5: Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Cleveland, El Camino, Kennedy, Monroe, Northridge Academy, Daniel Pearl Magnet, Taft, Verdugo, Sylmar, Van Nuys, Jefferson, and Lincoln High Schools.	
<b>BALANCED TRADITIONAL TRACK</b>	Monday, August 9, 2010
For three senior high schools in Local District 2: Arleta, Polytechnic, and Sun Valley High Schools.	

The complete calendars with all school holidays, pupil-free days, intersession, and staff furlough days for LAUSD schools can be found at online at [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net), click on **About LAUSD**,

then **District Information**, scroll down to **Facts & Resources**, click on **District Calendar**. Or call your local school or local district office.



# BRAVO!

## To These Outstanding LAUSD Schools

### El Camino Real High School

in Woodland Hills won the US Academic Decathlon in April, its sixth national title, which is a competition record. The contest was held in Omaha, Nebraska, where the El Camino students scored the eleventh win for LAUSD schools.

### Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies (SOCES)

received the Magnet Schools of America School of Distinction Award, which is based on academic achievement, closing the achievement gap, and unique programs. SOCES is one of only 30 schools in the entire country to receive the recognition this year — the third time it has been so honored. SOCES is the only 2010 recipient in California.

### Holmes Middle School

Robotics Team has won four major awards in robotics competitions in Southern California. The wins by the Team, the Eaglebotz, are even more impressive because in every contest, they faced off against dozens of high school teams. The Holmes students recall only one middle school competitor and more than forty high school teams.

A team of **North Hollywood High School** students placed third in the U.S. Department of Energy's National Science Bowl competition in Washington, D.C. The contest involved 68 high schools from 42 states solving complex math equations and answering difficult science questions.

## New School Year

from page 1

- Class size remains the same, due to savings from furlough days.
- Nearly 1000 teachers and support staff could be laid off.
- School nurses services could be reduced to a half-day for elementary schools, 1.5 days for middle schools, 1.75 days for senior highs.
- Counselors to student ratios could be changed to one counselor for 800 students in senior highs, one counselor to 1000 students in middle schools, one counselor to 1000 Options students.
- Art and music programs in elementary schools could be reduced 50%. ●

## Parents Step Up,

from page 2

explains Principal Elizabeth Abramowitz. "They contribute in concrete ways to the success of our students."

That success is considerable. Fairburn's 2009 API is 957. The parent component is growing as school resources diminish. "When money for intervention programs was cut, parents figured out how they could help," says Ms. Abramowitz.

Michelle Goodman, who has two children at Fairburn, says effective parent involvement soared when Fairburn's E-Mail Train was created. Nearly 95% of parents have signed on, and receive almost daily messages about what parents are doing at school and what is needed. Parents access email at work, at home, or at a library. "The e-mail train is four years old, and it really works," reports Ms. Goodman. She recalls a transportation problem for the school's "Turn Off TV on Tuesday Nights" program in which teachers and Ms. Abramowitz visit students at home to *catch them reading*. Ms Goodman says, "I sent out an email. In ten minutes, 20 parents with SUVs volunteered to drive our staff to nearly 100 Fairburn homes to surprise our readers." ●



Fairburn's Reading Buddies are organized and led by parents who volunteer weekly to sustain the program.



## A CommUNITY Success

**W**hat began as a suggestion from one parent at Foshay Learning Center resulted in a new — and hugely successful — event.

It underscores how valuable parent involvement can be to a school. The event was the first-ever community fair. More than 1000 people attended; nearly 20 area businesses and agencies had booths. “And we ran out of hot dogs after cooking 2000 of them,” laughs Yolanda McCoy-Thomas, Foshay’s Title 1 Advisor.

The Foshay CommUNITY Fair was designed to showcase the different cultures of the area along with the positive diversity that characterizes the school. In past years, the event was simply a sixth grade orientation, open to area fifth-grade students and

their families who would be attending Foshay. But this year parent Brenda Powell spoke up, “Let’s open this up,” she said. “We can display our academic strengths and the different cultures that define who we are in the Foshay community.” Principal Yvonne Garrison Edwards added, “This is an example of how the world should be — everyone, every ethnicity enjoying each other and embracing all cultures.”

The Fair included performances by student musicians and community dancers, demonstrations by the Foshay robotics team and blood pressure counseling by a local nursing school. City and LAUSD officials who attended applauded the success of the event. “There was a strong sense of family,” says Ms. McCoy-Thomas. “It turned out to be so much more than we ever expected,” thanks to hard work by the school community and that first suggestion by a parent. ●